

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 230818

FOLLOWING REPEAT PRETORIA 5373 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO CAPE TOWN
DURBAN JOHANNESBURG 12 SEP.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5373

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, SA

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF BIKO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

1. ACCORDING TO SEPTEMBER 12 PRESS REPORTS, BRIGADIER J. COETZEE, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE SECURITY POLICE, HAS CONFIRMED THAT ELEVEN FRIENDS AND RELATIVES OF STEVE BIKO WERE DETAINED UNDER THE INTERNAL SECURITY ACT IN EARLY MORNING SWEEPS ON SEPTEMBER 11, THE EVE OF THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF BIKO'S DEATH.

2. THE ELEVEN DETAINEES ARE: MRS. NOBANDILE MVOVO (BIKO'S SISTER), MXOLISI MVOVO, MS. THOKO MPUMLWANA, SILUMKO SOKUMPA, MS. PUMLA SIMANGA (FORMERLY SANGOTSHA), MS. KOLEKA MBILINI, MZWAKHE MBILINI, FUMBATHILE MBILINI, A FOURTH MEMBER OF THE MBILINI FAMILY, ALL FROM THE EASTERN CAPE AND MS. THENJIWE MTINTSO, AND FARIUS KGKONG FROM JOHANNESBURG.

3. THE CITIZEN ACCOUNT SAYS THAT THE SECURITY SWEEP WAS
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RELATED TO EXPECTED DISTURBANCES ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF BIKO'S DEATH. IT QUOTES KING WILLIAMS TOWN POLICE SPOKESMAN AS SAYING THERE HAVE BEEN CALLS FOR WORK BOYCOTTS BUT THAT NO TROUBLE WAS NOW EXPECTED. DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GENERAL KRIEL IS REPORTED AS SAYING "LAW AND ORDER WILL BE MAINTAINED AT ALL TIMES."

4. THE INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS, FOR WHICH MRS. MVOVO

WORKED, REACTED IMMEDIATELY BY PUBLIC ASKING JUSTICE MINISTER KRUGER TO RELEASE OR CHARGE HER. ITS STATEMENT, ISSUED BY DIRECTOR VAN WYK, SAYS "THE ACTION TAKEN AGAINST MRS. MVOVO AND HER HUSBAND MXOLISI, ADDS CONSIDERABLY TO THE BURDEN BORNE BY A FAMILY THAT HAS ALREADY SUFFERED GREATLY AT THE HANDS OF THE POLICE."

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY CONTACTS IN EAST LONDON SAY THE KING WILLIAMS TOWN GROUP DETAINEES ARE BEING HELD IN GRAHAMSTOWN AND ACCESS HAS NOT BEEN ALLOWED. EMBASSY HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CONTACT OTHER BIKO FAMILY MEMBERS TO DATE. GENERAL BELIEF OF CLOSE ASSOCIATES IS THAT THE DETENTIONS, AT LEAST FOR THE MVOVOS, WILL NOT BE LONG BUT IS MEANT MORE AS A WARNING THAT THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE STILL BEING MONITORED. CONTACTS SPOKE TO FEEL THAT THE SAG AUTHORITIES HAD NO GENUINE CONCERN ABOUT POTENTIAL DISTURBANCES OVER THE BIKO DEATH ANNIVERSARY. TO THE CONTRARY, MOST FELT THAT THESE ACTIONS, IF ANYTHING, WOULD RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DISTURBANCES.

6. BECAUSE MRS. VOVO IS WELL KNOWN TO EMBASSY AS ARE HER HUSBAND AND MRS. MPUMLWANA, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE AND POSSIBLY HELPFUL IN BOTH INDICATING OUR CONCERN AND PERHAPS EASING THE TERMS OF DETENTION TO SEEK VISITING RIGHTS.

7. ACTION SUGGESTED: IN VIEW OF THE STANDING OF THE MVOVOS IN PARTICULAR, BUT ALSO THE OTHER PERSONS DETAINED, WITHIN
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THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND THE FACT THAT, DUE TO THE CONNECTION WITH BIKO, THESE DETENTIONS WILL DRAW INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION. THE EMBASSY ANTICIPATES THAT INQUIRIES MAY COME UP IN THE DEPARTMENT NOON PRESS BRIEFING. WE WOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE BE USED BY PRESS SPOKESMAN: QUOTE THE UNITED STATES CONTINUES TO DEPLORE THE DETENTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIZENS WITHOUT CHARGE OR RECOURSE TO TRIAL. THESE LATEST DETENTIONS OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE LATE MR. BIKO CAN ONLY EXACERBATE ALREADY STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN SEGMENTS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE SAG WOULD IMMEDIATELY CHARGE OR RELEASE THEM.
END QUOTE.
EDMONDSON
UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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